

INTERACTING WITH FAMILY, RELATIVES AND FRIENDS OF STUDENTS

Are you perhaps training team members. Are you training groups of workers. Are you holding seminars. Are you having a mentoring ministry. If so, remember God's family priorities.

INTRODUCTION

Each student is not an individual existing by himself. You are not **just** a student; you are a son or you are a husband; you are a preacher in a church; you have a pastor who is over you; you have a group of students you are leading. There is a whole network of people you are connected with. We want to give you ideas in dealing with those people, not with the student himself, but with his acquaintances.

Example: Michael, a coach, went to the Baltics to lead a group. He took his wife along. While he was happily teaching the group, his wife was in the kitchen with the wife of one of the men. She could feel that the wife of this student was very upset. So she began to talk to this lady, and the wife of the student said, "I hate your husband." "Why?" "Well, because my husband was working and working and working, and then your husband came and took him even more away from me and my family. Now I will never see him anymore." So she was not very happy. She is the wife of a student. A person that is related to the student.

You have the same connections. You may have a good student, but maybe his pastor is not in agreement. Or maybe he has a very weak group of children he is teaching. How are we going to help those people? Not the students, but the ones connected with them.

Right now, I want to give you 50 practical pointers in dealing with the acquaintances of your students.

FIFTY PRACTICAL POINTERS

1. Remember, students require permission to study .

If the student is a young person, remember that his parents have the primary responsibility for his training before God. If he is married, you must remember that his wife has a close responsibility before God with her husband. So, we always require that our students have the permission of their wives to study . Also, his pastor or overseer needs to give written permission for him to study .

2. Remember that you are their servant and a co-laborer in training the student.

You are not Mr. Big the instructor or professor. No, you are the servant, making your student successful.

3. Remember that your student may lack experience, training and spiritual maturity.

Remember that their pastor or other people lack experience and training. Remember that many people in the churches today do not work from the Bible, they only work from tradition. Some of **you** still have that problem. You would rather work from your tradition than according to the Bible. Be careful.



4. Remember the pastor is responsible for his flock and their spiritual training and growth.

So if a pastor does not want you to come to his church, wait until a few months later. God will change his heart. God will bring a new pastor or other circumstances. Work with the pastor, not the students, if you want to be successful.

5. Remember that it is difficult for these acquaintances to be objective.

They only know the student. They do not know the training program. They know very little about you.

6. Remember that ladies, especially, over-react to real or imagined offenses.

This can mean wives, mothers, or grandmothers. Remember however, that there is usually some reason somewhere for their being upset.

7. Remember that some of these people may be upset as a direct result of their own frustrations.

Maybe they are frustrated in their relationship with the student. 90% of all problems we encounter are due to our failure as a parent, wife, etc... Help these people to see their own responsibility and how to be successful. Maybe they are experiencing frustration in adjusting to the new spiritual times in the country. Some pastors know they should start a new church, but they do not know how and they are afraid. That may be why they are very negative.

8. Remember that prevention of problems with acquaintances is better than any cure.

Prevention is better than any cure. If you go to a church, let us say, and you have an arm full of materials for your students and you have nothing for the pastor, the pastor may think, "Hmmm, nothing for me." He may feel left out or neglected. But if you give him a little brochure, maybe three pages thick, and you say, "Oh, I brought something special for you. I have been thinking about you and praying for you, and I thought this would be something you would enjoy and would be helpful." If it really comes from your heart, if you have really been praying, then he feels, "I was not forgotten, and they are not against me." A bit of prevention is better than any cure.

9. Remember, most questions and upsets can be avoided by orientation and loving communication with the student's family and acquaintances.

We suggest that at the end of your lesson series, you have a meeting for all the friends and relatives of your students. Perhaps you can serve a meal, or if that is too difficult, you can give them tea and a piece of cake.

Here is what you can do:

- 1) Say thank you to the students. Thank the church leaders for allowing you to train the students. Express thanks to the family members for making it possible by giving the students free time.
- 2) Publicly, in front of all these acquaintances, encourage the students to do something special for their family members, and to do something special to help the church leaders.
- 3) Give an opportunity for all the other acquaintances to ask you questions.
- 4) Then you will ask permission to come again to lead these wonderful people in this beautiful village. Ask for permission. They will probably say, "Oh, sure!" And you already have the first 'yes'.
- 5) Do not pull any surprises on people. Do not say to your student, "Oh, how about having a whole day of prayer next Saturday!" If nobody in the church and none of the family members knows about it, it is a shock. It is too short notice.

10. Remember, every permanent solution will probably come as a result of good cooperation between home, church and the training leader in the province.

11. Remember that for every acquaintance that voices a question or a problem, there are probably others who have the same feelings but do not want to speak. So meeting that need, helping that one person, often means you are helping many others.

12. Remember that a pastor or relative who calls to your attention an offense/problem is doing the right thing and is to be commended.

They are doing the right thing when they see a problem or difficulty and they tell you about it. By telling you about it you can then do something about it. Instead they could have just talked behind your back. Be thankful for it and tell them, "Oh, thank you for telling me this, I appreciate it. This is helpful."

13. Remember that every misunderstanding or problem is a good opportunity to build a deeper relationship with that student's home, with his wife or with his other friends.

So, it is an opportunity for discipleship. You have been wanting to talk to his friends and now you have an opportunity. So do not be afraid of somebody coming to you with a question or a negative comment. We have a saying, "What do you do when somebody gives you a lemon?" A lemon is pretty sour, pretty bitter. So what do you do when somebody gives you something sour? "When somebody gives you a lemon, you make lemonade." Something nice and tasty.



14. Remember to discuss problems when they are still small, and not yet critical.

Remember to discuss problems when they are still small, and not yet critical. This is important!

15. Remember to keep your composure regardless of their anger or their emotions.

They may be upset. They may be angry. But as long as you do not retaliate, you do not have a war. What does the Bible say to do if somebody whacks you one? **A gentle answer turns away wrath.**

16. Remember that the Lord has the key to any problem.

That is why I am not afraid of problems. Every problem has a solution. What an opportunity for us to discover that solution. Never deal with a problem without the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

17. Remember the power of prayer, before, during and after a confrontation with people.

Remember Nehemiah. He was working before the king, and one time he was thinking about his people in Jerusalem. He forgot to smile and so the king said, "What is the matter with you this morning?" What could he say, "Oh, excuse me, I forgot to smile. Ha Ha Ha." It says right there, "Quickly I offered a prayer to God." That ought to be our normal natural reaction.

18. Remember to use the Word of God to guide, help, comfort, heal and instruct.

Always have the Bible with you. Know where to find the verses or have the verses memorized. Use Bible verses with people and pray together. If somebody says to you, "I hate you, and I do not like what you are doing." Maybe they are totally wrong, but you do not have to say, "What is that?" You may say, "I understand how you feel." Have you ever been angry and frustrated and not understood something? If you have, then you know just how he feels, so you may say, "Yeah, I understand how you feel, and I am sorry, but I do not have an answer for you now. But you know, the first thing we ought to do is pray about it. Let us do that right now." So you touch the person and you pray. Then you shake hands and say, "I will be praying more about it. I will come back and we will talk some more later."

19. Remember that some pastors, wives and mothers are especially defensive about a student who is doing poorly.

If he is failing the training, they defend him because they feel guilty about it. How would your wife feel if you, her husband, were a lousy student? Sometimes pastors too feel defensive because of guilt. "Maybe I have given him the wrong student. Maybe I should have selected somebody else." He feels responsible and is therefore defensive. They subconsciously see the failure of the student as their own failure.

20. Remember to focus the pastor's attention on the fact that you are a team with him.

You need to be a team with the church leaders and have the same goal for their students. The more team spirit that is created between local church leaders and the ministry coach, the better it will be for the students.

21. Remember to assure the acquaintances of your students of your love for him and for them.

Assure them that you have confidence in what God can do in this student's life. If this is how people approach you, "I bet you our student is the poorest one you have," you need to answer with something like: "Oh, no! No, no, no. I am glad to have him as a student. Maybe there are a few better students, yes, but God is doing a beautiful job in his life. I am not here to be the judge. I am here as an instrument so God will do more beautiful things in his life and I am very happy to work together with him." Then you go away smiling. And when they meet your student they say, "Oh, your coach said some very nice things about you." And the student says, "Oh, he did, well I have really got to work hard then." That is what you want to accomplish. That is what you want to see happen.

You can do all these things, as long as it is honestly from your heart. And it can be honestly from your heart if you have been thinking about these things a long time before and praying for your students.

22. Remember to assure or encourage the church leaders and his relatives that God has an answer for this particular problem even though, right now, nobody knows it.

Together we will find it. Together we will find the answer.

23. Remember to "hear the relative out."

To hear them out. That is to really listen deeply and let them talk until they are finished. Listening so that you really understand all their feelings.

24. Remember to listen actively not passively.

Passive listening is simply saying, "Uh huh, yes, yes, yes. I have heard this before. Sure, okay. Here is the answer." Active listening is thinking, "What do I hear behind the person's talk?"

- 1) What is his motive for telling me this?
- 2) Are they his feelings, or did he get the ideas from somebody else?
- 3) Is this only his idea, or is this an actual fact?
- 4) Is it against me or is it against a lesson book?
- 5) Or is it against the time necessary to study, or what is the problem?

That is active listening. Then you rephrase their question or their complaint. So you say, "If I understood it right then, you are saying..." And you rephrase the thing you have just heard. And they will say, "Yes, yes" or they will say, "No, no, no, it is not like that." Through this method you get the real information.

25. Remember to leave some statements and some assertions unchallenged.

"Your program is a really weak program." Or, "I know of a lot better program than this program." Or, "I think your leaders do not know how to organize it properly." Some of these statements or assertions you can leave unchallenged. It is not a debate to see who is right and who is wrong. You may simply say, "Yeah, that is possible." Or, "I do not know about the other program." Or, "I am sure God is using other people and other methods just like He is using us." Or if it is a complaint about your leaders say, "Yeah, I understand. They are human; they make mistakes. They are not perfect. They do not know everything."

If it is an attack against you, oh, what an opportunity to be really humble. Say, "Yeah, maybe you are right. I am sorry. Sometimes my motives just are not right. My Bible says that my heart is desperately wicked. Would you pray for me please?" It will get really quiet.

The pastor of the biggest Baptist church in America knocks on doors every week and does evangelism. Once he knocked on a door and a lady came to the door. He said, "Good evening. My name is John Smith. I am the pastor of the corner church near the city." She said, "Yes, I know you." She was smoking her cigarette. "I know you. I was in your church. The choir sang too loud. You preached too long, and the service lasted too long. There was no place for me to sit. I will never go back." And he said, "I am very sorry that

we offended you. Would you pray for me?" He was still standing outside and just bowed his head. After a moment she said, "Excuse me, I did not mean to offend you." Naturally she did not know how to pray ! And he was standing there so she said, "Excuse me, would you like to come in and have a cup of coffee?" He said, "Oh yeah, I really would like a cup of coffee." He went in, he opened his Bible. Ten minutes later, he and that lady were on their knees and she repented. Can you believe it? Because he had the heart of a servant, and he was humble when he was attacked. Praise God! That is how I should be living. I hope that is how you want to live.

26. Remember that you can prove that you are right and still lose that student and his family.

Most of that depends on whether you have the heart and attitude of a servant.

27. Remember that you or your team could have been wrong, failed, or shown poor judgment.

Never say: "Oh no, we could not have done that." Never imply perfection.

28. Remember to admit your error or shortcomings.

If they point out something, be sure to admit it. When God called to Adam, what was Adam's response? "Yes, it was me. Yes, I did it." What was Eve's response? "Yes, I did it." No! Everybody says, "Oh, somebody else did it." Learn from those people in the first chapters in the Bible. Learn from it — do not do the same thing.

29. Remember to ask the students' acquaintances for their prayer.

Assure them of your prayers for them. "Please pray for me, and I will pray for you." And you write it down. "Oh, he is writing down my own name." It impresses them when they know that in your notebook you have a special page for prayer.

30. Remember to end the confrontation lovingly and in prayer.

Smile, shake hands, say something nice or encouraging. Promise to do better, etc.

31. Remember to leave any situation open for future healing no matter how ugly it was.

Healing of relationships. Maybe there has been a real big problem and three months later you see this person standing by the bus stop with a whole bunch of packages that he needs to carry home, but there is no way he can do that. Oh, that is your chance. So you rush over and you say, "Oh, let me help you." And maybe he says, "No, it is not necessary, it is not necessary." But you stay right there. And as soon as he needs to go somewhere you grab something and you help him. Of course that is only an illustration. Look for opportunities to serve.

32. Remember to think as the student's acquaintances would.

Think as a pastor. Or remember to think as a student's wife. Not only as a student or as a coach. Remember sometimes to think about how they feel. For a coach it is nothing to say, "Oh, well, we are almost finished. Maybe you can just stay fifteen minutes extra." It may be nothing to you, but consider how their families may feel.

33. Remember to build confidence in the relatives and friends of the Training ministry .

Openness, honesty, concern, love and wisdom so often help people to develop a new broader vision for the first time, or to see new opportunities.

34. Remember to support any of your team members as much as possible and bring them together to talk if there is question about their actions.

So gently keep backing your team member. Admit their shortcomings, but highlight their good qualities. Never criticize your team member in front of students and their families. Perhaps apologize. Take blame yourself.

35. Remember to look for the 'root' problem.

If the acquaintances or student are dissatisfied, look for the 'root' or cause of the problem. Do not just consider what they said, but what they really meant.

36. Remember to come to some conclusions, and end with some action that gives hope and purpose.

If you do not do this, discouragement may result.

37. Remember to involve the relatives in some purposeful project to help the group or the training ministry .

38. Remember to re-enforce your love within a week after any problems.

You can call them on the telephone or see them at church.

39. Remember to keep confidences confidential.

Other people team members that are in no way involved in the problem should not be given details of what happened or was said.

40. Remember to protect your wife's and children's attitude towards the relatives of students who may be upset with you.

Only make positive, prayerful comments about them.

41. Remember that when you allow wives or close relatives to be negligent in their responsibilities, they may become critical of the training ministry as a guilt reaction.

For instance, maybe someone promised the student a ride and then did not do it with the result the student missed a seminar and an exam. Maybe the wife does not cooperate in keeping the children quiet. Possibly someone promised to harvest the garden, did not do it, and all the products were **ruined**. Relatives In such type of circumstances may feel guilty and may not want to see you and perhaps even spread negative comments about the training ministry .

42. Remember the importance of sharing early in order to prevent attitude or action problems.

Avoid shock reactions such as; "Why did you not tell me, I had no idea."

43. Remember to use hard copy (paper) for noting serious problems.

Write down problems which arise in discipline or in conferences with pastors, especially when warnings are given about closing down a group, possible suspension or withdrawal or non-re-enrollment of an individual.

44. Remember to help students with transfer problems to other institutes.

If you really love the student and his church you will help him to get further training.

45. Remember to try in every way to keep the student through the rest of the lessons .

46. Remember the student should be present only during certain counseling sessions when it is appropriate.

So you may have some private sessions with the pastor or other people involved.

47. Remember to avoid generalizations with pastors.

They need specifics about attitudes, discipline problems, academic areas, etc.

48. Remember to emphasize to the student in class and also at home that the training leaders and pastor/elders are agreed and working together.

49. Remember to train pastor/elders to communicate with the coach regarding results, problems, etc.

50. Remember to make every student conference or confrontation a learning experience for yourself.

Go away analyzing; "What happened here?"

How come I missed it there? Or what could I have done earlier?

Thank you for your attention.

**I trust that these comments will help you to work
with friends and relatives of students.**

God bless you.

Blessings to you, our dear friends!

Practical assignment

	Completed
➤ Choose a minimum of 4 of the practical pointers	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Find a way to put a different one of these 4 into practice every week for the next month	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ At the end of every week write a short, paragraph report stating which pointer you chose and how you put it into practice	<input type="checkbox"/>